

# Nation

The background of the cover is a photograph of a massive open-pit mine in Guatemala. The mine's terraced levels are visible, showing a mix of brown earth and grey rock. In the foreground, there are green plants with long, brown, curved seed pods, partially obscuring the view of the mine.

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## Educate me

By Will Nicholls

I never knew how blind I truly was until I saw the Tories were looking at creating a formal Native education system through a First Nations Education Act. I had always assumed one was already in place as the ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development funded First Nations schools across the country. The Act which could be considered by Parliament this year has high hopes of "breaking the cycle of failure on reserve schools." It is touted as one of the most important and unexpected priorities for the Harper government.

Well bless my soul and let me see the light shine on a brighter future. Apparently this important consideration was overlooked by the Senate's Committee on Aboriginal Peoples when some report recommended legislation that would create a Native education system.

We are told key decision-makers in Harper's administration are quite excited and favour the idea.

Many promoters claim there is no education system for Native communities. I thought the blame was with the ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, but once again I was wrong. It turns out these are just schools run by band councils. Of course we should not even think of comparing this to such things as the English School Board of Montreal or other such organizations. After all there is a difference between those who attended residential school and those who attended normal schools. Some know how to run a school and others don't.

It has nothing to do with the fact First Nations schools are underfunded in comparison to non-Native schools. It has nothing to do with the fact teachers are often paid less than their southern coun-

terparts. It has nothing to do with the conditions of substandard buildings with mould and other problems. It has nothing to do with a lack of libraries of such high-tech items like a computer lab.

It also has nothing to do with the fact that on a regular basis promises of renovations, upgrades or a new school have seen monies disappear to fund other projects. If the students have waited this long then surely another year won't matter.

Still the bells and whistles accompanying this proposed Act (would it still be under Aboriginal Affairs?) might do some good. The Senate's report talks about legislation that wouldn't force First Nations to be a part of the Act unless they wanted to be. First Nations' school boards would be a step towards erasing the stigma of enforced attendance in residential schools.

Harper has indicated he is willing to fund a First Nations education system providing it is effective and accountable. One can easily agree with effectiveness but First Nations would need to have details on the accountability. Given the high degree of accountability First Nations face and the penalties of third-party management they would want to know more details.

If you think this is something new then you should realize that bureaucracy destroys initiative. There is little that bureaucracy hates more than innovation, especially innovation that produces better results than old routines. Improvements always make those at the top of the heap look inept. Who enjoys looking inept? So will we see something new that works or will the new boss be the same as the old boss?

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photo by:  
Will Nicholls

# Patience for patients

By Sonny Orr



One of the most dreaded things we don't look forward to in life is a visit to the doctor. The probing and poking, prodding and questioning by a doctor or nurse can be frightening or calming to the nerves. This, of course, depends on what type of personality you have. This might take a visit to the psychiatrist first, who will determine what sign you were born under in order to figure out if you really can handle a trip to the doctor's office.

What ails you? Does it hurt here or here? Does your knee jerk enough? Or can you handle the stick down the throat? These are just some of the mysterious actions that a medical know-it-all will conduct on you. Personally, I think that many people who choose medicine as a career are quite brave and more willing to tell you what is wrong with you than tell you what is not wrong with you.

For instance, when you show up with a pain in your gut region, the question is often related to bowel movements and urinary-tract drips. Then the poking of certain pressure points in your gut almost always causes some sort of pain that you didn't have in the first place, then for sure, some sort of exploratory surgery is required. Do you often have nightmares of lying there on the operating table with most of your inner organs on display and everything is shown to an audience of first-year medical students on a large screen TV? Ugh, I'm sorry, but I ate poutine just before the pain showed up and is that a chicken bone sticking through that thick mucous membrane thing?

Well, I do sympathize with health professionals, because I believe in a good healthcare system, like the one we Cree enjoy and depend on. Who else will help the family when it comes to supporting a loved one in critical condition in a city far away from home – the CBHSSJB does, that's who. If our Cree system wasn't in place, we would probably have the same

treatment as those living in other provinces.

I've heard of people on the Ontario side, who would be given a train ticket to Cochrane and then they would have to make their own way to Toronto to get to their appointment. Wow, talk about healthcare. In many ways, the system we have is much better for us and well suited to meet our needs. Where else is bear fat a cure on par with Tylenol or spiritual practices endorsed as a psychological aid? In Eeyou Istchee, that's where.

Back in the day when people used to walk, paddle and use dog teams to get around, medicine had to be gotten from the lands around you. One story I heard was of a trapper with a broken leg and the bone sticking out the upper thigh, who had to think quickly in order to cure himself. Luckily, he had his packsack on him when he fell to the ground and his trusty axe in his hand. He chopped the trees around him to make a fire and heated up the nearby stones until they were white hot. He then made a miniature sweat lodge around his broken leg and carefully heated up his leg until it was nearly the texture of a medium rare steak. Then he set his bone back into place, tying up his leg with roots and a makeshift cast made out of small trees. He sat there until the leg had healed enough so he could get up and make crutches. He then made it back to his camp where he continued with his home-remedy regime until he was completely healed. He continued on with his trapping and made it back to town the following spring, fit as a fiddle.

Today, we deal with many types of diseases and physical dangers that didn't exist before – the most obvious involving moving vehicles. Now, the use of air ambulances is nearly a daily affair. I would think that we would be in much better shape if we would just take more care and a more cautious approach to life in general. Who knows? You could be next.

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# Join the force

## The Eeyou Eenou Police Force is looking for new recruits

By Brandon Judd

The Eeyou Istchee Cree took another step towards professionalizing their police force on January 23 with the start of the AEC Police Technology Program at Collège Ellis in Drummondville.

The program is a partnership between the Eeyou Eenou Police Force (EEPF), Collège Ellis and the Cree School Board. Its goal is to teach Cree students the necessary skills to become certified police officers in the province of Quebec.

"It's important for us to hire well-trained patrol officers with a good knowledge of the Cree language and culture," Police Chief Reggie Bobbish said over the phone, an earnestness clear in his voice. "The majority of people we serve are Cree-speaking. In order to professionalize the police force, we need our officers to be able to communicate with the people they serve."

Graduates of the 12-month program will embark on a 14-week Police Patrolling program at the École Nationale de Police du Québec. Upon completion of this program, they will have the same certification as any other police officer in Quebec.

The program is similar to the AEC program offered at John Abbott College, but Collège Ellis worked closely with the EEPF and the Cree School Board to tailor the program to the community's needs. In addition to the training program, the college will also help students acquire their 4A drivers' license, which allows its holder to drive an emergency vehicle, such as a police car.

"The Cree Regional Authority (CRA) had a big say in how we would accommodate the students," said Johnny Trapper, Director of Human Resources at the CRA. "We have a very good working relationship with

the college. They're really extending their hand for us."

Trapper said the program was nearly derailed when Collège Ellis' first proposal was rejected by the Quebec Ministry of Education. But Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come intervened on behalf of the EEPF, and the program was approved.

"We needed to recruit officers for the new police force, and needed the program for this," said Trapper. "Our deepest thanks goes to our Grand Chief for intervening on our behalf."

Bobbish addressed the program's 21-person inaugural class on January 23, saying they were helping their community take another step towards autonomy.

"We, the Crees, are on the path of self-governance," he told the students. "But to achieve this goal we have to demonstrate our abilities to implement structures and entities that govern and regulate a democratic society."

The EEPF says the program is crucial to achieving their goal of profes-

**"IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO HIRE WELL-TRAINED PATROL OFFICERS WITH A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF THE CREE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE."**

sionalizing the new police force, which has yet to celebrate its first anniversary. Before April 2011, Cree police forces were independent of each other, and there was no regional force. The EEPF, overseen by the CRA, changed this. By regionalizing, the department is now able to offer working conditions similar to other police forces in Canada. The pension plan saw an especially significant upgrade.

"Some people were in their 20th year when the EEPF was born," said Trapper. "The CRA absorbed all their



costs from day one. It was as if that police officer started paying into the plan in 1991."

Equally important, said both Trapper and Bobbish, was the guarantee that EEPF police would receive equivalent training to other forces

across the country. They said this ensures a professional and reliable service, while giving its members opportunities to climb ranks within a police force of their choosing. It's an opportunity both for the individual and the community.

The EEPF stressed this is not a one-time affair. They are offering another program beginning this coming September. Applications will be accepted until March 1. For more information, contact [recruitment@eepf.ca](mailto:recruitment@eepf.ca).

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# Roadblock

## Tallymen in Mistissini demand the right to construct highway

By Jesse Staniforth

news

On Saturday, January 28, the Mistissini Band Council received a 10-day injunction against the roadblock on Highway 167 North.

The roadblock, preventing workers from beginning the construction of an extension of the highway to the Otish Mountains as part of the Charest government's Plan Nord, had been put up by a group of tallymen whose traplines the highway is to cross. Rather than accept government compensation for roads built on traditional hunting and trapping lands, the tallymen demanded that they – in consortium with Victoriaville's Excavation Marchand et Fils and Saint-Étienne-des-Grès's Construction et Pavage Boisvert – be given the contract for the construction of the road.

Le Devoir reports that under the advice of Jocelyn Deschamps, a Montreal lobbyist employed by Excavation Marchand, the tallymen formed a partnership with Excavation Marchand and Pavage Boisvert, who offered equipment, staff and financial backing that the tallymen did not have. The new alliance was named Uuchii General Contractors Inc., and with it they intended to deal directly with the Quebec government for the construction of Highway 167.

Jean Marchand, proprietor of Excavation Marchand, said that this new way of trying to do business in the Cree Nation was bound to be controversial, but under the Paix des Braves it should be allowed.

"Anybody in Canada is allowed to do business," he said. "But since this is the first time somebody gets out of the Cree nation way of doing business, it creates some turmoil within the people. From my point-of-view, Cree people have ancestral rights, and that land belongs to the people who were there before. It belongs to them and their family, transferred from generation to generation. Some of those people were born on those lands."



1st day of roadblock Hwy 167 North

photo by Luke McLeod

According to Bill Namagoose, Executive Director of the Grand Council of the Crees, this approach put the tallymen at odds with the people of Mistissini. Echoing a press release from the Mistissini Band Council, Namagoose says that the Chief and Council have done everything in their power to negotiate with the Quebec government to achieve the best possible agreement for the people of the community. As a result, they have gained a preferential contract for the construction of Section B of the highway, along with some slashing work in Section A of the extension.

must call a public tender to build roads anywhere in Quebec. They misinterpreted that to say it could be given to individuals. It cannot. It can only be given to municipalities and band councils. You and I can't be given a road contract – if that was the way, the minister would give contracts to all his friends."

Namagoose said that the only option was for the Quebec government to negotiate with the band council – which is what it did. The band council said its negotiations were designed to serve the best interests of everyone in Mistissini, but also made special arrangements to

**"THEY MISINTERPRETED THAT TO SAY IT COULD BE GIVEN TO INDIVIDUALS. IT CANNOT. IT CAN ONLY BE GIVEN TO MUNICIPALITIES AND BAND COUNCILS. YOU AND I CAN'T BE GIVEN A ROAD CONTRACT – IF THAT WAS THE WAY, THE MINISTER WOULD GIVE CONTRACTS TO ALL HIS FRIENDS."**

"What they're asking the Quebec government to do is totally impossible," said Namagoose. "They're asking the Minister of Transport to give the partnership that [Excavation] Marchand and [Construction et Pavage] Boisvert have formed with some Crees a contract without public tender, but the Minister of Transport

compensate the tallymen in question. According to a document the band council released detailing the history of the disagreement, the contract for the extension of Highway 167 was given to the Cree Nation of Mistissini, which was to subcontract with Mistissini Trust, Eskan and the General Partnership LRP, with workers to be supplied by the

Makaahiikan Construction company. Additional contracts, including catering and waste disposal, were to be given to Mistissini businesses, while the slashing contract was given to Eenatuk, which (according to the band council document) hired the tallymen and their families.

The same band council document declares that the tallymen were given special consideration in a variety of ways, including being put on recommended hiring lists, having their machinery given first priority for work, and being given some choice of the direction that slashing work would take place.

Nonetheless, on January 19, the tallymen set up their blockade, using equipment emblazoned with decals of Uuchii General Contractors. (Namagoose said that members of the band council checked the license plates and found the equipment belonged to Excavation Marchand.)

The blockade remained in place until the afternoon of Friday, January 27, at

which time the court passed a 10-day injunction against it.

At press time, calls to Deschamps and the tallymen continued to go unanswered. However, Marchand was willing to speak to *the Nation*, picking his words carefully.

"We're not against anybody in the Cree Nation," said Marchand. "The family [of tallyman Coone Matoush] asked us to help them. That's what we're doing. We are with the Matoush family, the consortium and the tallymen, to help them to bring prosperity to the Cree people. We don't have bad intentions."

Namagoose sees the potential effects of the blockade as far more damaging.

"They're jeopardizing Cree rights by saying they're now becoming property rights," Namagoose said. "It's going to court, and we're very concerned about that. We've always tried to limit the interpretation of Cree rights to how the Crees understand them, not to how some judge will interpret them. We want Cree rights, and the interpretation

of treaty rights to be expanded. But if you give [the rights] to a commercial enterprise like Marchand and Boisvert, and they take those rights to court, then we will intervene. But we're concerned with how the judge will interpret those rights – especially the rights in [Land] Categories 2 and 3 [of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement]."

Namagoose said that while Crees have had some successes in the courts, their power as a people comes from 30 years of political and public efforts. He worries that this confrontation, regardless of how it ends, will erode some of those successes.

"Of course, we'll get extra scrutiny from now on," he said. "As you know, Aboriginal people are 10 times more accountable than the average Canadian citizen when it comes to accounting and financial matters. With these kinds of actions from these companies, that only means more scrutiny."



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## NDP leadership debate at Concordia University

On Wednesday, January 25, the NDP held a leadership debate in Montreal at Concordia University's Oscar Peterson Concert Hall on its Loyola campus. However, a few faces were absent from the debate.

Outrement NDP MP Thomas Mulcair and Ontario's Paul Dewar could not attend because of previous engagements, while Abitibi-James Bay-Nunavik-Eeyou MP Romeo Saganash had to cancel due to an illness in his family.

In attendance were Peggy Nash, Brian Topp, Martin Singh, Niki Ashton and Nathan Cullen. Speaking in English and French, the candidates discussed their views on such topics as education, environment, military

spending and Stephen Harper's support for Internet censorship.

Education took up a large portion of the debate seeing that many of those in attendance were students. Former NDP president Brian Topp stated, "Education is a right, [and] we should not have to pay for a right."

The question of Canadian support for Palestinian statehood drew the most applause from the university crowd, with all of the candidates voicing support for the motion.

## Video contest for Quebec's English-speaking youth

Are you an English-speaking Quebec high-school student between the ages of 13 and 18? If so, the Quebec Community Groups Network and CBC invites you to create a 2-3 minute video sharing what you feel

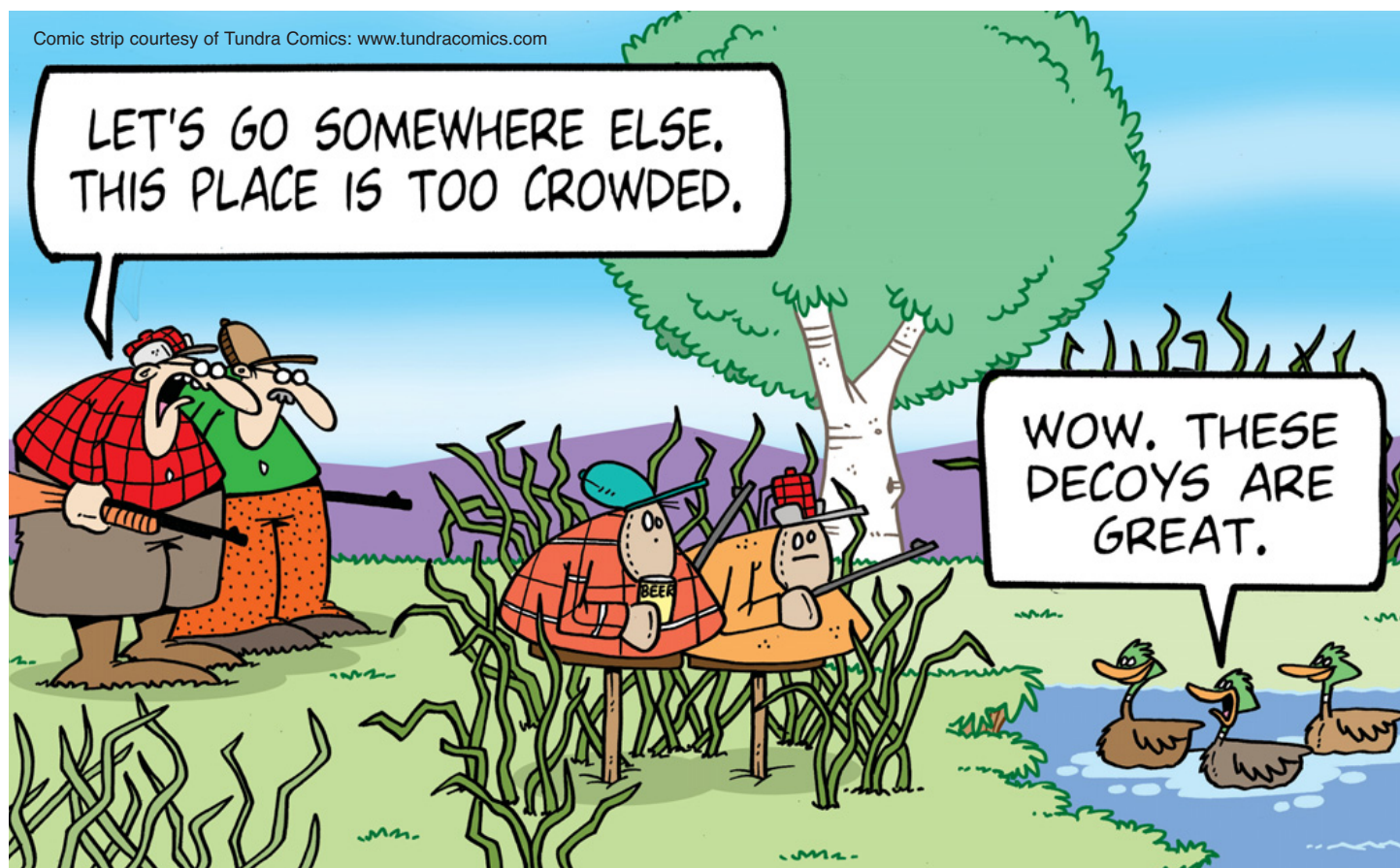
represents your community, your roots, cultural heritage and identity for the My Quebec Roots Video Contest. The finalists will be chosen by public vote and the winners selected by a panel of judges.

Post your videos at [myquebec-roots.cbc.ca](http://myquebec-roots.cbc.ca), for the chance to win either an iPad 2, an iPod Touch and a \$50 CBC gift certificate. The deadline to apply is April 30.

## Correction

In the article, "The Dog Project celebrates canine freedom" (Vol. 19, No. 06, January 27, 2012), the name of the Youth Fusion Media project coordinator is Skye Maule-O'Brien and not Skye-Maul O'Brien as reported. The project was inspired by Mohawk artist Greg Staats, who quoted the 1975 Indian and Northern Affairs guidelines in his 2001 art project titled "Memorandum".

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: [www.tundracomics.com](http://www.tundracomics.com)



# Not quite historic

## Meeting Harper in Ottawa proves disappointing for First Nations leaders

By Daniel David

Prime Minister Stephen Harper billed the Crown-First Nations Gathering as a “historic event”. So did Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations. The mainstream media might be forgiven for almost unanimously declaring this meeting to be “historic”. This one meeting would, according to both Atleo and Harper, “reset the relationship” between the Crown and First Nations. In the end, however, despite all the drumming and wampum belts, it was little more than a “photo op” designed to deflect the average Canadian’s outrage at the federal government for everything conveyed by one word – Attawapiskat.

Of course, it wasn’t just Attawapiskat. It was also Pikangikum, Kashechewan, St. Theresa’s Point and dozens of other places that were once

full of hope but have transformed into cesspools of despair, poverty and suicide. Canadians knew what had happened and who to blame because they’d been told by decades of royal commissions, parliamentary inquiries, and enough studies to fill a room. The evidence pointed to policies of the federal government, its incompetence and wilful ignorance.

But Ottawa spun an illusion that people in these communities were used to living in mouldy homes, washing with and drinking contaminated water, sending their kids to schools that were fire traps – that is if they had a school or books or teachers. They had done so for decades, Ottawa said. If a story complaining about living conditions hit the headlines, federal officials shifted the

blame on to the victim. The band council couldn’t handle its money, wasn’t building homes, or was corrupt and incompetent. This became standard operating procedure.

Then YouTube came along and shattered that illusion. Video of a family of six huddled around one shared mattress on the floor of a tiny plywood shack heated by a makeshift stove penetrated layers of national ignorance. Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan blamed Attawapiskat’s chief and council for all those condemned “Indian Affairs houses”, a phrase that refers to the much too-common substandard quality of on-reserve home construction dictated by Duncan’s department. But Canadian’s weren’t buying it anymore. The federal government realized that. It needed a



Chief Patrick Madahbee of Anishinabek Nation



diversion. That's why Harper called this "Crown-First Nations" shindig.

Shift to the opening of this "historic" gathering at Old City Hall. Only 175 of the estimated 500 chiefs heading to Ottawa will be allowed in. The hall is small and the breakout rooms are tiny. This is where it's expected the chiefs will work with various departmental ministers and staff in workshops with grandiose titles like "Strengthening the Relationship", "Unlocking the Potential" and "Realizing the Promise". Then Harper makes it known that he'll be there only for the ceremonial stuff before he's on a plane to Davos, Switzerland to meet with the world's richest people and their companies.

The chiefs are not impressed and say so. Harper, faced with charges that he's about to abandon the world's poorest so he can meet the world's richest, agrees to meet a handful of chiefs on the eve of the meeting, to let a few more chiefs attend the meetings at Old City Hall, and to hear complaints about an agenda that seems to "reset" nothing.

Harper's meeting the evening before averts disaster. It placates many chiefs but a few still refuse to go to Old City Hall and a few more say they'll walk out if their shopping list doesn't get serious attention. They want their land rights recognized, a share of resources, treaties respected, and an end to antagonistic legal actions by federal lawyers on anything Indigenous. Just meet us halfway, they seem to say.



Cue the drums and feathers, pomp and circumstance, smudges and wampum belts. Governor-General David Johnston, Harper and Atleo spend the morning delivering speeches full of clichés and historic references: from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to Indian Residential schools. Harper raises eyebrows when he seems to claim citizenship with "my home nation, the Blood First Nation of Southern Alberta". The irony is beyond mainstream reporters.

Mainstream reporters also miss the fact that Harper's list of "accomplishments", seen from the perspective of the reserve, isn't all that impressive.

"Our government has addressed historic grievances by accelerating the settlement of both comprehensive and specific claims."

"We have extended the full protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA)..."

"We are... about to ensure that the property of First Nations women and children are protected when relationships end."

Each of the above examples are, in fact, more of the top-down, Great-White-Father-Knows-Best approach that First Nations have had imposed upon them seemingly forever. Ottawa imposed time limits and caps on compensation on land claims, even though everyone knows that game has always been fixed to favour the federal government. The federal government never provided the tools needed by First Nations so they might phase in the CHRA or adapt their Indian Act-



Ghislain Picard

based codes to respect Matrimonial Property Rights.

In the end, it boils down to these few words in Harper's speech. He spoke about the need to "unlock the enormous economic potential of First Nations people" in the development of Canada's natural resources and economy. He didn't use the word "for" in that sentence – as in, "unlock the economic potential for First Nations people" which would have changed the whole meaning and purpose of that meeting.

It wasn't a mistake. The signs before this meeting were not encouraging, no matter what Atleo said. The chiefs might have arrived with a long list of wants and needs, but also with very low expectations. They knew that words, at least from the federal government, are full of empty promise until put down onto paper.

The AFN's Regional Chief from BC, Judy Wilson-Raybould expressed that pessimism best. "So with all due respect, Mr. Prime Minister, on this point we must ask that you please rethink your government's approach set out in a number of recent bills introduced or proposed affecting our peoples, which seek to tinker around the edges of the Indian Act in a piecemeal way with federally imposed solutions to our issues and in advance of our Nations having first had the opportunity to address core governance reform."

It boiled down to dueling metaphors. Harper didn't want to remove a "stump", meaning the Indian Act, and leave an empty hole in the legislative ground. Atleo referred to a "boulder", also the Indian Act, that blocked real reform by removal of Canada's on-going system of internal colonialism.

In the end, Harper didn't leave to hob-nob at the World Economic Forum in Davos. He stayed the whole day. The mainstream media sung his praises, while a few chiefs said they would have stomped out if he hadn't stayed. After all, he invited them there to a meeting that was supposed to "reset the relationship" from bad to good, or at least better. His departure would have sent a very different signal to the chiefs but also to many Canadians who have become increasingly critical of this government



Stan Beardy, Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation

ever since the Attawapiskat story hit the headlines – and have stayed that way.

At the end of the day, Duncan walked out to deliver his take on a joint statement. It addressed nothing that the chiefs wanted. The chiefs went in hoping for a sign that treaties would be respected, revenue might be shared, rights to self-determination finally acknowledged. The "joint" statement didn't mention anything about any of that.

Instead, the statement included this – a commitment by the federal government to move "toward a single, multi-year Government of Canada financial arrangement for First Nations with high-performing governance systems."

This had some chiefs, and some reporters too, wondering what this meant. What did "high-performing governance systems" mean? Did it mean

that band councils be penalized for not being "high-performing"? It had more than a few chiefs wondering if "historic" was the right term for this meeting and was this the "reset relationship" they wanted with the Crown.

Former Prime Minister Paul Martin called the result "incomprehensible". Speaking to a Montreal radio station, Martin said the federal government didn't need "more studies to discover that poverty exists on reserves." Ottawa had ignored education, health, housing and safe drinking water and study after study shows that "underfunding really is discrimination." These studies have recommended what needs to be done to improve living conditions on reserves. All that's really needed now, Martin said, "is for the federal government to decide to get it done."



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## Fact-finding mission

### Wemindji chief visits Guatemala to get a better understanding of Goldcorp

By Will Nicholls

Ever since Goldcorp arrived in the Cree territory to open up the Eleonore Mine Project there have been questions about their dealings in Guatemala. The Marlin goldmine in that country has been an object of controversy from day one and continues to this day. Residents of the Cree community of Wemindji expressed concerns and wondered who they were really making a deal with – a company that respected social and environmental responsibility or an opportunistic greed-driven machine.

These were questions Wemindji Chief Rodney Mark, McGill anthropologist Colin Scott and *the Nation* went to Guatemala to investigate. The answers are far from being resolved but a greater understanding of Goldcorp, the Marlin mine, the affected communities and the controversy was attained.

To understand what is happening one must look at the communities themselves. Before the arrival of Goldcorp, residents were extremely poor and largely uneducated. These two conditions went hand-in-hand. Most people had to leave the area and go to Mexico to become migrant farm workers for three months or more. One can only

imagine the low pay since Mexicans were going to the United States to be extremely poor-paid migrant workers. The conditions were horrendous with little food and no housing, running water or other facilities. Workers would bring their whole families including children. This meant no schooling, but schools either didn't exist or weren't easily available in any case. With little or no education they were locked into a cycle of poverty. Add to this a 30-year civil war where violence was and still is an everyday part of Guatemalan life and you begin to understand how there could be controversy.

On top of it all is the fact the majority of Guatemala's population is of Mayan ancestry, who have been discriminated against for ages. They have a deep distrust of the government and don't believe it will protect them. Hardly surprising as almost any Canadian First Nations person believes the same of Canada's government. It is something that First Nations can empathize with the Mayan people.

Distrust of Goldcorp was a reality given the conditions in the area where they wished to mine. Religious organiza-

tions and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) were quick to react. They, along with anti-mine residents, claimed Goldcorp was responsible for systematic violence, environmental and health violations, human-rights violations, labour problems and a general lack of social responsibility.

Goldcorp's presentations while responding to the issue at times had to be taken with a grain of salt. Of course they would show their best side and this would be expected. It was up to us to see beneath the corporate image. And to be fair Goldcorp answered a lot of the questions and laid them to rest.

An example of this was the claim they contaminated a river that ran beside the mining operation. On a map we saw monitoring stations before the mine, at the mine and after the mine. There was no appreciable difference from one end to the other. Yes, there was contamination but it was already present before the river arrived or left the mine site. The data is analyzed by Goldcorp, AMAC (an independent community-based committee) and Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines and



Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

Given the problems with the Ouje-Bougoumou experience with mining, *the Nation* asked about tailing disposal and the cyanide extraction process. Goldcorp is actually quite ahead of the game on both counts. They take the tailing and encapsulate them in clay. According to the latest information this is very environmentally friendly. Not only that, they have a closed cyanide process which is to their credit. Water going into the tailings pond is processed and cleaned beforehand. The only questionable claim in this area is their "state-of-the-art cyanide destruction process." A geologist stated an element, and cyanide is one, cannot be destroyed.

"You can never totally eliminate potential risk. In each instance potential risks have to be measured against potential benefits." (editorial: Vol. 19 No. 5, January 13, 2012)

This is what the affected communities around Guatemala's Marlin mine have to consider. They are divided and the current ratio is 60/40 in favour of Goldcorp's perceived benefits to the area and subsequent job creation. Therein lies the root of their problems.

Just as in First Nation communities there are different factions wanting their voices heard and concerns dealt with. Some Goldcorp can deal with, but others aren't so easy to satisfy. For instance, some former landowners after selling the land expected it to return to them after spending the money. Some were against Goldcorp from day one. Chief Rodney Mark and Colin Scott stayed a couple of extra days in order to meet with some of the anti-mine residents. Mark said, "As in any community there will be those who are for a project and those who are against it."

One example was Deodora Hernandez, a landowner who was shot. The bullet entered through her cheek and exited at the neck. Goldcorp urged authorities to investigate as it was rumoured some of their employees were involved. Goldcorp said the attacks might have been due to other factors. However, a meeting between Hernandez and Rights Action tells a dif-

ferent story. She says there were people who wanted her dead as a result of her decision not to deal with Goldcorp. Hernandez was unwilling to sell her land as she had scrimped and saved to buy it and wanted something to pass on to her daughter. Before she had been shot Hernandez told Rights Action her family had been threatened. Her neighbour, who also opposed Goldcorp, was beheaded at a nearby river.

It is hard to say how much Goldcorp played in this event. Yes, during a meeting to look at the future of Goldcorp in Guatemala it was mentioned that Hernandez's refusal would hold up exploration but this was just an information session. Following that her water was cut off and she received smaller amounts of rations from the community. A local man held a machete to her throat. Was it a case of local people taking care of business when a problem is indicated? After all the recent civil war makes people more prone to violence or is it that while upper management tries to do good, middle or lower management ensure business runs smoothly?

It's hard to tell as Goldcorp has made efforts to be a part of the communities around them. They have a daycare and women and single fathers only work day shifts so that they can take care of their children. Employee benefits are great. There are bonuses equal to a month's pay for employees who have worked a

full year, a production bonus and a further Christmas bonus of a month's salary. Employees receive 15 days of vacation per year, free healthcare, get a breakfast, free transportation to and from the mine site, a literacy program and a retirement saving plan.

In addition once or twice a year employees have an opportunity to buy computers, fridges and other goods. Goldcorp pays for the merchandise and deducts it from their salaries throughout the year.

Mark said perhaps more consultations on a collective level would have



Underground at the Marlin mine



Estuardo Calderon of the Sierra Madre Foundation and coffee farmers





Delfino Tema and Mario Tema



Mayan community of Sipacapa

helped with Goldcorp's problems. "The NGOs' and opposition's viewpoints were quite different from what we were shown, but there is only so much a company can do. The mine is a fact of life and if you sell the land you are not going to get it back again."

Then Mark added, "There is a lot of good and bad in the situation. Mine employees are well off compared to other locals and this has divided the community in some ways. One of the mine employees said he was making \$2,000 a month and that's a lot in Guatemala but considering in Canada miners make \$80,000 minimum it's quite a difference. If you look at gross revenue from the Marlin mine it's a small part of the overhead."

Mark wants to establish a relationship with the Mayan people and other Guatemalans living near the Marlin mine. "I didn't go there to impose anything, but I want to help these people. We can share ideas and experiences. There is an international connection between Wemindji and Guatemala. I've invited them to come to our community," he said.

Employees of Goldcorp are looking to a future when the mine closes. Many are buying land and growing cash crops. They are employing other residents to work the land for them. Mark said many people on both sides are wondering what will happen when the mine closes in about six years.

In the nearby community of San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Goldcorp spent \$3 million building and stocking a hospital. They are also involved in the Sierra

Madre Foundation. Part of this foundation is dedicated to assisting local farmers to produce coffee and other crops. This is a change as locals used to harvest coffee in other regions and countries.

Questions still remain as looking at the 2009 report on the mine you see that on December 24 a junction on the pipe that transports tailings to the tailings-storage facility failed, resulting in an 83 cubic meter spill of treated tailings. Approximately 20% of the tailings were recovered and approximately 80% flowed through a gully and roadside drainage ditch and reached the natural intermittent stream, which is known downstream as Quebrada Seca (dry creek). The report said all material was removed and the entire area was cleaned. Normally remediation data would be included as to determine risks.

In the end though has Goldcorp been the villain they have been made out to be? Has the benefits outweighed the risks? Questions on contamination and social responsibility remain, but are not as bad as they are made out to be. Experts have said the closed cyanide process for gold mining is state-of-the-art. The plans to encapsulate mine tailings with clay are above and beyond what most mining companies do in third-world countries. The potentials for violence in the community already existed and Goldcorp must deal with that. In any case, this poverty-stricken region has an opportunity and it is up to them to deal with the reality of a mine that isn't going anywhere.





# More graduates needed

## The Cree School Board tackles its low graduation rate

By Jesse Staniforth

In September, Mistissini's Voyageur Memorial School celebrated a milestone achievement: it saw its first two students – Geraldine Shecapio and Jessica Jolly – graduate since 2006. Both have gone on to study at CEGEP – Jolly in Val-d'Or and Shecapio in Gatineau.

The celebration over the achievements of those students, though, also brought with it questions about the low graduation rate and what initiatives are in place to improve it.

Joe MacNeil, Deputy Director of the Cree School Board (CSB), is quick to point out that the problem of low graduation rates is not specific to Mistissini.

"Mistissini will have its own factors and variables that come into play," he said, "but what you see there could be applied to any school in the Cree School Board. All combined, the graduation rate for the whole Cree School Board has gone down to 1.1%, which puts us at the bottom of all school boards in Quebec. The graduation rates have been plunging for as many years as I can remember. Our kids are not being prepared, period."

MacNeil pointed to the study commissioned in 2006 by CSB Director General Abraham Jolly, which portrayed the schools of the CSB as failing, across the board, to properly educate students.

**"ALL COMBINED, THE GRADUATION RATE FOR THE WHOLE CREE SCHOOL BOARD HAS GONE DOWN TO 1.1%, WHICH PUTS US AT THE BOTTOM OF ALL SCHOOL BOARDS IN QUEBEC."**

"We had to face the brutal facts," he said. "The report was a sharp, clear, unretouched photo of what the situation in the school board was."

An ugly fact that has mostly remained unchanged is that it has become almost impossible to gauge the proper grade level for many of the students. On average, students in the CSB test between



Geraldine Shecapio

two and five years behind their grade level, while others test so low that they do not meet even the base aptitudes the tests are designed to measure.

Nonetheless, MacNeil is quick to underline that the students themselves are not the problem, nor have they ever been.

"What everyone agrees on, no quibbling," he said, "is that the graduation

rates have nothing to do with the intelligence or aptitude of the students."

The problem, instead, is systemic, and the responsibility for those systemic problems lies largely with the CSB itself as a guiding body. MacNeil identifies the greatest problems as a lack of accountability, a lack of direction for improvement,



Jessica Jolly

and, most basically, a lack of capacity to teach reading skills to students.

In the past, he explained, the CSB administered standardized testing, but upon receiving the results, did not put them to appropriate use.

After the tests were given, said MacNeil, "the test information came back, saying a particular group of students or even a particular student was weak in a certain area. But nothing was ever done about it. There was no systematic, coordinated approach where the schools sat down with the test results and said, 'We've got kids here who cannot comprehend what they read. We've got kids who cannot do simple addition and subtraction – in Grades 6 or 7!'"

This, for MacNeil, was the central flaw of the CSB. Yet as much as the CSB may have failed to guide in the past, since the 2006 study, it has been working to turn CSB education standards around.

"We need to analyze the data to understand the major issues. And then the adults in the schools need to ask,



## Message from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports

Falling in the middle of the school year, Hooked on School Days provide parents and other players in regional development—community groups, and education, health and social services networks—the opportunity to breath new energy into their efforts to help our young people achieve success in school.

As part of the celebration of these days, which will take place from February 13 to 17 this year, activities have been organized all over Québec to recognize the efforts of our young people as well as to inspire them to excel and to persevere. These activities will also raise public awareness of the importance of getting organized, focusing on the actions to be taken and adapting them to the particular style, reality and needs of each community.

I encourage everyone to participate and proudly show your support for our young people by wearing the green and white ribbon that is the symbol of Hooked on School Days.

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‘What do we need to learn in order to address the needs of our students? How do we constantly monitor how we’re using that learning, and the results that we’re getting?’”

As a blueprint for school renewal, the CSB began in 2011 to put a Strategic Action Plan into action. This five-year plan is based on processes that have improved schools in poverty-stricken, gang-ridden, multilingual inner-city neighbourhoods in the United States – some of the schools where outside factors make learning the most difficult for students.

“We cannot continue to accept the results we were getting in the past,” MacNeil said. “They will not change unless we change. We need to get away from the low expectations that people have of our students – not expecting much of the kids because they’re second-language learners, they’re geographically isolated, and their parents have less education than parents down south. That’s all false: our schools are in a position to make an impact. What we need to do is use data to determine what needs teachers have to meet.”

Principal to the Strategic Action Plan is the demand that each school prepare a Local School Improvement Plan, in which they state their goals for the year and outline the means they intend to use to achieve those goals.

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"It's an accountability measure," said MacNeil. "If a school says they want to improve their reading scores by 5% across the board, they have to get to work to make that happen. That has never been done before."

Equally crucial is the adoption of a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum, a standard set of educational material for use across the CSB.

"There was never an internal curriculum," MacNeil explained. "We had competencies and standards from the province that showed what students should be able to achieve by graduation, but teachers themselves could determine what kinds of lessons could best reach that competency. There was no guide to explain what competencies meant, or how to plan the day, week, month or year. There was no sense of pacing, scope or sequence to what was to be taught."

**"THE PROBLEM WITH BLAME IS THAT IN THIS CASE, THERE'S NO WAY TO FIND SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING THEY KNEW WAS WRONG. THEY REALLY HAD NO CAPACITY TO LIFT UP THEIR HEADS FROM THE WORK AND SEE THAT THERE HAD TO BE A BETTER WAY."**

"What that means," he continued, "is that every teacher in every school was deciding on their own what students should learn, at what level and when a student should get this knowledge – in a school board with nine schools. Having no agreement on these essential points adds up to curricular chaos."

For this reason, the CSB is implementing plans to rigorously structure all teaching that takes place within its board. The goal, MacNeil said, is to make sure that students at any grade should be performing within the standards for that grade. This would mean if they were to transfer to another school somewhere else in the province or the country, they would be in line with the expectations for curriculum no matter where their education continued.

In order to help those students who have been caught for years in the ailing system, the CSB has developed a Secondary Intervention program, through which qualified teachers are sent into the CSB to

tutor older students as they approach graduation so that they can write the math, history and language arts exams.

"Last year, after Goose Break, we sent 25 tutors all across the territory," MacNeil said. "And while we didn't reach any staggering new heights, we stopped the plunge. We didn't fall farther than we had the year before. In fact, we're now [at a graduation rate of] over 8% from a low of 1.1%. This year, we're expanding the program. The teachers are going out to tutor the students starting after February, rather than after Goose Break."

Combining the Secondary Intervention program, the focus on data, the drive to ensure teachers learn new approaches, the development of new curriculum, and the focus on teaching literacy, the CSB will, MacNeil believes, make significant improvements soon enough.

Returning to the initial questions about low graduation rates, MacNeil pointed out that CSB coordinator Kim Quinn has successfully implemented a reading-skills program in Mississauga that has shown dramatic improvement in the reading levels of younger students. But it will be years before those improvements are reflected in graduation levels.

"We won't have 70% graduation rates in five years," he said. "But what we are aiming for is 25% increase in five years. And that's the five-year graduation rate. If we give students six years to graduate, we're likely to see the graduation rates up to 40% by the end of the five-year Strategic Plan."

In spite of the widespread problems within the CSB, MacNeil is hesitant to place blame for its failings.

"The problem with blame," he said, "is that in this case, there's no way to find someone doing something they knew was wrong. They really had no capacity to lift up their heads from the

work and see that there had to be a better way. The way things were being done, it's like someone digging a hole for so long that they don't realize that the shovel doesn't work anymore – they just keep plugging away. And that's what people were doing at the Cree School Board, for decades."

In putting together a vigorous plan for school improvements, the CSB has left MacNeil feeling more than just optimistic.

"We've joined with people to create a hope – no, not just a hope, an expectation – that we will have success in the future."

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# Looking for employment

## The MAMU! career fair is a great way of understanding the job market

By Christine Rigby



Dolorès André of FNHRDCQ, one of the organizers

It is no secret that the labour market has seen better days. There seem to be fewer and fewer jobs out there and competition is stiff. Whether you are thinking about re-entering the workforce, changing fields or getting your feet wet for the first time, everyone can benefit from a little help.

While the Internet has become a useful tool for people on the hunt for a job, nothing beats good old face-to-face human contact. Those of us who remember a time before the Internet can attest to this fact. Employers like to put a face to a name and get a sense of who you are, something they cannot do without meeting you in person.

With this in mind, career fairs are a great way to expand your job-search options.

Some focus on particular fields, while others aim to help people looking for their first job. In some cases, they concentrate on particular cultural or com-

munity groups. MAMU! Ensemble! Together! is a career expo developed by the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ), that caters specifically to First Nations individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 living in the city.

The 2012 edition of MAMU! was held at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) on January 27. The second of what we hope will remain an annual event. With the help of several collaborators, including Paige Isaac (McGill's First Peoples' House), Dolorès André (FNHRDCQ) and Donald Pilot (MAMU!), this year's event hosted a variety of representatives from organizations, such as Service Canada, The City of Montreal, Hydro-Québec and The Native Friendship Centre.

It was a day that created an environment in which people could not only explore employment opportunities, but improve, job-hunting skills and network.

A series of interactive activities, including lectures and social networking games like human bingo (an icebreaker game), offered a great opportunity for people to explore career and training options, ask questions and get tips that might help give them a competitive edge in the labour market.

While some people may prefer to stick to the Internet or good old-fashioned "pounding the pavement", it is important to note that career fairs not only offer an occasion to meet several employers at once, but also the chance to meet employers who you might not otherwise have access to.

If you decide to attend a career expo, remember to treat it like you are headed to a real interview, first impressions do matter. Here are a few tips to help you make the most of the experience.

**1. Arrive early** – If it is a large-scale event chances are there will be a lot of attendees. Get there early, before the doors open, to secure a good spot in line. The fact that you arrive early will also demonstrate your enthusiasm and drive.

**2. Be prepared** – Make several copies of your resume to hand out to potential employers. Prepare a short monologue highlighting your strong points, goals and experience. Be ready to answer any questions you might be asked so that you are not put on the spot.

**3. Dress the part** – Job fairs are not casual events, companies have put time and effort into participating and are looking for candidates who do the same. This does not necessarily mean you need to dig out a suit from the back of your closet, but you should do your best to be presentable and look professional. That said, do wear comfortable shoes, you may be on your feet for several hours.





Mamu! Organizer Donald Pilot and friends

**4. Attend the lectures** – Lectures and seminars often provide excellent tips and tools for how to get ahead in the labour market. In some cases they may offer specialized information you may not find anywhere else.

**5. Don't be shy** – Ask questions, collect business cards and take notes to keep all the information you gather organized. Employers are more responsive to people who show interest in their companies.

**6. Network** – Career fairs are an ideal way to meet people, employers and other job-hunters. Talking to as many people as possible can open doors to opportunities you may not have known existed. Making new connections can also help people become familiar with your name, which may improve your chances in getting the job you want.

**7. Smile** – Be enthusiastic and bring your positivity. Employers are looking for people who will bring a good attitude to a new position.

**8. Say thank you** – If you have made a strong connection with one or a few agencies, take the time to write a thank-you e-mail to the contact you have on the business card you've collected. Doing this will keep your name fresh in their minds as well as show your continued interest in their company.

Finally, keep in mind that, even if you leave without a job, you will always leave with something of value. Take the experience for what it is, a chance to practice your interviewing and networking skills, and hope for the best. Good luck!



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Geoffrey Kelley, Minister responsible for Native Affairs Quebec,

## Legally empowered Chisasibi inaugurates its new Justice Centre

By Jesse Staniforth

Hope for the future: that was the theme uniting the many speakers and dignitaries who gathered in Chisasibi to open the community's new Justice Centre on January 24.

Chisasibi is the third community to inaugurate a Justice Centre in the past year, beginning with Mistissini last January, along with Waswanipi and Oujé-Bougoumou. The facility has a courtroom and a variety of additional features, including video-conferencing equipment, mediation support and family group-conference rooms. Along with the new facilities, a series of prevention and reintegration services are being brought in to help balance Quebec court policies with Cree culture and traditions.

Following an opening blessing from Elder Samuel Bearskin, the crowd heard various speeches, beginning with Chief Abraham Rupert, who set the tone for the day's discussions by framing the Justice Centre as the beginning of the future of the Cree Nation.

Referring to the recent blackout that the community suffered in the cold days of early December, Chief Rupert reminded the crowd that Chisasibi pulled through.

"We come from a culture that lives with the elements," Chief Rupert said. "The teachings from the Elders brought us through. And it's not just about survival, it's a way of life – how we understand life and what our purpose on earth is."

The new Justice Centre, said Chief Rupert, is central to the responsibilities the Cree Nation takes on in the journey to self-government. But he also underlined the hope that the courtroom would one day no longer be of use, even as he recognized that that day has not yet come.

**"THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT TAKES MORE THAN A SLAP ON THE WRIST TO PUT YOU ON THE RIGHT TRACK. SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO GET YOURSELF TO A CERTAIN POINT BEFORE YOU UNDERSTAND OR WAKE UP, AND LOOK AT YOUR LIFE."**

"There are times when it takes more than a slap on the wrist to put you on the right track," he said. "Sometimes you have to get yourself to a certain point before you understand or wake up, and look at your life. This building is the purpose. It's more than a slap on the wrist."

Following Chief Rupert, the crowd heard speeches by Honourable Coordinating Judge for Abitibi-Témiscamingue Jocelyn Geoffroy and Chief Justice for the Courts of Quebec Elizabeth Corte. Each spoke about the importance of providing Cree communities with greater access to legal rights.

Corte admitted that her participation in the inauguration of the Mistissini

Justice Facility last January was her first presence in the Cree community.

"This first contact convinced me that we had common concerns regarding the delivery of justice," she said. "It further convinced me that cultural differences were not an obstacle to working together. Our differences do not change the

fact that as human beings, we agree on the ultimate objectives of justice: harmony in families, security in communities, reparation for harm done to victims or the community, and healing and reintegration of the person accused."

Two provincial ministers spoke as well: Minister responsible for Northern Quebec Pierre Corbeil and Minister responsible for Native Affairs Geoffrey Kelley.

Kelley affirmed that the new Justice Centres are a great improvement on the difficult history of itinerant courts in Cree communities, which in the past were often unable to offer victims and the accused basic infrastructure and



needs, such as private rooms in which to meet with their lawyers.

As well, Kelley praised Donald Nicholls, Director of Justice and Correctional Services for the Grand Council of the Crees (GCC), for driving programs that help reintegrate those returning from prison back into the community through focus on Cree traditions and heritage.

Closing the speeches, Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff said, "The opening of the Justice Facility represents an important milestone for Chisasibi and the administration of justice in the Eeyou Istchee."

He concurred with Kelley about the central role of Cree traditions in a just community.

"A properly functioning court is essential, but represents only part of what it takes to make a just and happy society," Iserhoff said. "We call this building a justice building, but it will also be a place for Chisasibi to uphold and protect Cree values and instil them in a troubled person. To insure that community members have the tools to make healthy choices in their lives, to get back on track after unhealthy choices that they made, and to allow a healing reconciliation to occur when someone has made a mistake along his or her path, or when he or she has been the unfortunate victim of a crime."

He ended with a prediction that soon the facility would see its proper share of Chisasibi Cree lawyers, judges and administrators, practicing law based in the Cree land and teachings.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Captain Karl Simard of the Eeyou Eenou Police Force praised both the building and the occasion.

"It's a historic event, that's for sure," he said. "It's a great building, and it's beautiful." He went on to praise the GCC's Justice Department for working to reintegrate incarcerated people by developing programs to meet their needs on individual levels.

"These are the kind of programs [incarcerated people] need to be reintegrated into society in a healthy way. This building, in the future, I hope they'll use it less to incarcerate people, but more to gather for the healing process."



Chief of Chisasibi Abraham Rupert at ribbon-cutting ceremony

On leaving the Justice Centre, the dignitaries visited Chisasibi's newly opened elementary school, where Kelley presented the community with a plaque commemorating the solidarity that helped them through the December blackout.

Afterward, Kelley connected community solidarity with the changes to the justice system.

Noting that Corte is interested in pursuing alternative sentencing that adopts Cree traditions, he explained, "In the long run, the rehabilitation of the people who cause these crimes is better for the community and better for society. Particularly with young offenders: you hope they're not heading toward a life of crime. Maybe they made a mistake one night, or a series of poor judgments, but there's no future in locking them up and throwing away the key. If the combination of Quebec experience and Cree values can come up with more positive outcomes for those people, then society in general emerges a winner."

The dignitaries ended their visit at the Elders Centre, where they ate a traditional meal of moose stew, bannock and camp tea.

Speaking of the Elders Centre as an example, Iserhoff stressed the importance to the Cree Nation of holding onto the traditional values that were driven out of many families by residential schooling. It will take all of the community, including Elders and various community resources, to bring Cree values into the justice system, he said.

"We have the resources to help our people," he went on. "The land, the language, our culture and values – those are the things we will pass on."

Iserhoff was optimistic about the willingness of the Quebec government, judiciary and court personnel to adopt Cree culture and values so that the justice system serves the Cree Nation well.

"That's what our culture is about – sharing, giving, nurturing and helping one another."



# Love on the run

## *The Nation's guide to wintry romantic getaways*

By Amy German

As February rolls around our attention always turns to the realm of red heart-shaped boxes and declarations of love in the name on Valentine's Day.

While chocolates are a nice gesture and a dozen red roses are the ultimate traditional gift of the season (though very hard to come by in Eeyou Istchee), there is no better way to celebrate your love than to book some special couples' time away from the rest of the world.

Whether you are looking to getaway for V Day or present your special someone with a sweet retreat package for a later date, *the Nation* has already gone through the trouble for our readers of tracking down Cupid to get his picks for romantic hotspots.

From sexy ski retreats to lush urban love nests, downtime at a spa or dining out in style; if you are looking for a couple's getaway, read through our getaway guide.

### Val-d'Or

While most Crees have stayed in Val-d'Or for one reason or another, it most likely wasn't because it was the first place that came to mind when planning out a romantic weekend.

But that doesn't mean it shouldn't be. If you plan it out right, Val-d'Or could be



Quality Inn and Suites

just the ticket for a loving weekend for two as the city now offers a lot when it comes to celebrating romance.

For styling accommodations, look no further than Val-d'Or's latest hotel edition – the Cree-owned Quality Inn and Suites. This spanking-new hotel's lush suites feature king-size beds with pillow tops and flat-screen HD TVs.

According to hotel manager Michael Prince, if you are looking to set the mood for love, the hotel can easily accommodate a request to cover the bed in rose petals or have roses in the room upon arrival.

The hotel will soon be offering a spa-weekend package in conjunction with Spa Bella Donna that will feature a luxurious room, a 60-minute massage, Scandinavian baths and a fruit cocktail served at the spa. Transportation to and from the spa can be arranged by the hotel, if desired.

While staying in Val-d'Or with your sweetheart, the hotel recommends a stop by Choco-Mango, the city's new artisanal chocolate shop, to purchase some exquisite handmade chocolates to stimulate your senses.

If you are looking for a sophisticated night on the town, the hottest place to go in Val-d'Or is Bar Bistro l'Entracte, the only place to offer high-end, Montreal-style bistro dining in the north.

For more info: [www.qualityinnvaldor.com](http://www.qualityinnvaldor.com); [www.cliniquebelladonna.com](http://www.cliniquebelladonna.com); [www.barbistroentracte.com](http://www.barbistroentracte.com)

### Montebello

Located between Ottawa and Montreal, the historic Château Montebello is one of Quebec's finest destination resorts as it offers a bevy of seasonal attractions in

a luxurious historic log-cabin-motif-chateau setting.

Once the private Seignior Club, since it was opened to the public in 1970 this chateau has been host to a wide variety of celebrities, royalty, prime min-



Montebello

isters and world leaders – having been host to a recent G8 summit.

While there is nothing more romantic than whisking away your lover to a chateau for a weekend, this particular one offers an ambiance like no other, with its dramatic high ceilings, rustic log cabin motif throughout the hotel and alluring central fireplace.

A Fairmont-owned resort, the Château Montebello offers romance packages for a one- or two-night stay that feature a 60-minute romantic massage for two at their brand-new spa, incredible table d'hôte dining at Aux Chantignoles Restaurant in the hotel, breakfast either in your room or at the buffet in the hotel as well as fancy perks such as chocolate-covered strawberries in your room.

If luxuriating in bed with your sweetheart isn't enough, while staying at Montebello guests can also engage in a wide variety of playful activities offered



either at the resort or nearby, such as curling, tube sliding, snowmobiling, skating, going for a sleigh ride, ice fishing, dog sledding, snowshoeing, skeet shooting, cross-country skiing and indoor tennis.

For those looking to explore the town of Montebello, the community is renowned for its top-notch French chefs, galleries, museums and historical tours.

For more info: [www.fairmont.com/montebello](http://www.fairmont.com/montebello)

### First Nations Hotel in Wendake

If your idea of romance is fine dining and comfort amidst traditional skins and furs, look no further than the Huron Wendake First Nation Reserve. Just minutes away from Quebec City, the First Nations Hotel is its own sensation as a combined four-star boutique hotel, museum and spa that celebrates Aboriginal culture in every way possible.

Opened in 2008, the hotel has had four years to refine its services down to perfection. Once more, spending your hard-earned dollars at this establishment is something that you can walk away from feeling good as the establishment employs over 300 local Aboriginals, from the front desk to those that tan the hides for the products in the gift shop.

More than just a gimmick, this destination offers a unique experience when it comes to ambiance as the hotel's rooms and suites feature Aboriginal elegance, such as hides on the beds, dream catchers, views of the surrounding lush forest and a top-notch restaurant that celebrates Aboriginal cuisine with a one-of-a-kind menu.

This is a place that those of Aboriginal descent can revel in as a Native success story and for those of other cultures to learn about Canada's first peoples while they luxuriate in the spa, tour the museum, shop for handicrafts or pause to enjoy such a unique experience.



First Nations Hotel in Wendake

In terms of romance packages, the hotel offers a special that features accommodation for one night, four-service dinner at the restaurant La Traite as well as breakfast the following morning, a visit to the Huron-Wendat museum, a



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The staff at *Adult Learnline* give advice not only to people who wish to resume their studies but also to companies that want to upgrade the competencies of their employees. Some of these questions relate, for example, to such matters as obtaining a diploma and training in traditional occupations and more specialized sectors.

Online staff can also provide you with information on vocational training options, the recognition of prior learning and student financial aid. Just think, you can make things much simpler with a single phone call!

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Hotel Intercontinental

bottle of sparkling wine, a “sweet surprise” in the room compliments of the hotel and parking.

New as of this January, guests can take advantage of the hotel’s Centre Nation Santé Spa, a first-of-its-kind as what is most likely Quebec’s only Aboriginal-themed spa, complete with a yurt and Native-inspired spa treatments.

For more info: [www.hotelpremieresnations.ca](http://www.hotelpremieresnations.ca)

## Montreal

If your sweetheart is looking for the style and sophistication of the big city to glam up a weekend of love, with its Old World architectural charm, high-end hotels and world-class restaurants, Old Montreal is the place to stay!

Known for its luxurious contemporary rooms, sophisticated nightlife and fine Provencal restaurant, the Hotel Intercontinental is a divine spot for a romantic getaway.

Located between the Old Port and the downtown area, this hotel is just minutes (by car) away from Montreal’s casino.

In terms of specials for romantic weekends, this hotel is offering two different specials: one for Valentine’s Day that features a special which includes dinner at the hotel’s Osco Restaurant and sparkling wine to get the romantic

juices flowing; and then another package with discounts for a series of cultural activities and a special rate on a second night.

While staying in Old Montreal there is a variety of activities for couples to engage in that are bound to bring you and your sweetheart closer together. Try skating in the evening to music on the quays of the Old Port in front of Marché Bonsecours, take a horse-drawn carriage ride under a snugly warm blanket or enjoy a play at the Centaur Theatre, only minutes away from the hotel.

If you are looking for a lovey-dovey dinner away from the hotel and are craving a steak, check out Gibby’s, an old-school steakhouse with a classic menu that’s located in a historical building, giving you that authentic Old Montreal experience.

For more info:

<http://montreal.intercontinental.com>;

<http://www.gibbys.com>;

[www.quaysoftheoldport.com](http://www.quaysoftheoldport.com)

## Spa Eastman

If you and your love are all about pampering and being good to your own bodies, your ideal getaway might just be an amorous weekend for two at the Spa Eastman in the Eastern Townships.

Indulge in a wide variety of massages, facials, hydrotherapy, body treatments, aromatherapy, hair-care treatments, natural-health cures and fantastic fitness programs at Quebec’s ultimate spa resort. There are so many different ways to pamper yourself at this destination that it would most likely take a few weeks at the spa to try out every service that Eastman offers.

While you are being good to your outsides, you can take good care of your insides at this picturesque vacation resort as the spa offers a variety of healthy haute cuisine made from top-quality products – fresh organic produce, complete stone-ground flours, maple syrup and honey as sweeteners



Spa Eastman



Special for Valentine's Day, running from February 10-19, the spa is offering a special romantic getaway that includes free ski passes at Mont Orford as part of a one-night stay at the resort or a guided tour and lunch at the vineyard Orpailleur in Dunham with a two-night stay.

For more info:  
[www.spa-eastman.com/](http://www.spa-eastman.com/)

### Saint-Sauveur

Just an hour north of Montreal, Saint-Sauveur plays host to a fantastic rendezvous for couples to getaway and enjoy cool days on the slopes and sizzling nights on the town.

Luxurious and centrally located, the Hotel Manoir Saint-Sauveur is an ideal spot to stay if you want to take advantage of the many hills that the Laurentians have to offer to skiers.

If you are not in the mood to ski, you and your darling could instead go dog sledding, cross-country skiing, skating, snowmobiling, horseback riding, on a helicopter tour or for a good, old-fashioned sleigh ride.

Or, if you find yourself achy after a day of exertion, pamper yourself with one of the hotel's many deluxe spa treatments.

Once the day is done you can kick back beside the hotel's outdoor bonfire located on the terrace where you have a view of the surrounding, illuminated ski hills as they twinkle in the night.

In the evening, you can enjoy one of the hotel's three fabulous restaurants or go out on the town for a chic and sophisticated gourmet experience at one of

Saint-Sauveur's many incredible restaurants.

Depending on your pleasure, you can then retire to your room for the night or party it up with your sweetheart at one of the town's many nightclubs or bars.

Whatever your desire, this Laurentian hub has a lot to offer for couples looking to spice up their romantic weekend with a bit of adrenaline and outdoor fun.

For more info: [www.manoir-saint-sauveur.com/en](http://www.manoir-saint-sauveur.com/en); [www.saint-sauveur.net/](http://www.saint-sauveur.net/)

### The Hilton Lac-Leamy Hotel

If the urban resort experience is just the thing for you and your sweetheart, Gatineau's Lac-Leamy hotel and casino has a lot to offer when it comes to Vegas-style entertainment, exquisite accommodations, fine dining and casino excitement.

Featuring lush classic rooms that are upgradable all the way to over-the-top executive floors, this casino hotel will have you and your darling living in the lap of luxury should you choose to getaway to this establishment.

A romance package at this resort includes a bottle of sparkling wine, sensuous chocolate-covered strawberries in the room and buffet breakfast for two at Arôme Seafood and Grill or American-style breakfast for two, served in the room.

To get your adrenaline pumping, try your hand at some games at the casino. Featuring slot machines, poker, keno and a variety of table games, the Lac-Leamy

has a game for just about everyone's taste.

While staying at the Hilton, be sure to dine in style at the hotel's Arôme Seafood and Grill restaurant and then take in one of the many incredible spectacles at the Théâtre du Casino.

With Ottawa just moments away from the hotel, there is just so much to do with getting out and about with your sweetheart. The two of you can skate down the Rideau Canal, hit the shops or



The Hilton Lac-Leamy Hotel

check out O-Town's wild nightlife to party the night away!

For more info: [www.casinosduquebec.com/lacleamy](http://www.casinosduquebec.com/lacleamy)

Whatever your pleasure, whether you choose to whisk your honey away for a wild weekend of love or cook them a simple romantic meal to show them your undying affection, it is the fact that you are celebrating your love that matters most, not how you do it.

On behalf of *the Nation*, Happy Valentine's Day!

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# CREE HOCKEY

## News & Notes

By Daniel Coyle

photo by Daniel Coyle

### Mistissini Senior Hockey & Broomball Tournament

The 25th edition of Mistissini's Senior Hockey & Broomball Tournament took place January 12-15. A total of 18 hockey teams and eight broomball teams participated in the event.

After winning their respective pools and semi-final match-ups it was the Wemindji Ice Stars and the Waswanipi Eagles who met in the Women's Broomball final. The Eagles repeated the shutout performance that they had against the Ice Stars on the tournament opening night, beating Wemindji in the final by a score of 2-0.

The Class C Hockey final was a battle of two Mistissini squads: the Beavers and the Ice Wolves. The two teams had met on the opening night of the tourney with the Ice Wolves topping the Beavers 6-2. However, the tables were turned in the Class C final as the Beavers got sweet revenge and the championship banner with 3-0 victory over the Ice Wolves.

Class B Hockey had the largest number of participating teams, at eight. The final brought together two undefeated teams – Pessamit Montagnais and the Whapmagoostui Predators. The two teams' first meeting of the tourney settled nothing as they tied 4-4. In the final, it was Pessamit Montagnais that was victorious, as they defeated the Predators by a score of 4-2.

The main event of the tourney was the Class A Final, with the Mistissini Trappers returning to their familiar role as a Class A championship team with

their 4-3 victory over the Waskaganish Renegades, upset the first place Waswanipi Chiefs in the semi-final to earn the right to face the Trappers.



### Waskaganish Invitational Hockey & Broomball Tournament

The annual Waskaganish Invitational Hockey & Broomball Tournament took place at the Sarah Stephen Memorial Arena on the weekend of January 19-22. The tournament saw action from 17 hockey teams and eight broomball teams, participating in three categories: Open Hockey, Recreational Hockey and Open Broomball.

In the Open Hockey category, eight teams participated from across Eeyou Itasca, each playing three games in the qualifying round. The Nemaska Axemen and Waskaganish Wings each finished the round with perfect 3-0 records, followed by the Mistissini Trappers and Wemindji Wolves who each notched two victories.

In the Open Broomball category, the Waskaganish Starlites took home championship honours with a 1-0 victory over the Nemaska Capitals. The Starlites won on the strength of Marie Hester's 2nd period goal – the lone tally in the game. In fact, the Starlites' road to the title

included three shutouts over their hometown rivals from Waskaganish and the Lac Simon Lakers in the preliminary round, and a 5-0 victory over Waskaganish in the championship round. The only time the Starlites gave up a goal was in a loss to the Wemindji Ice Stars early in the tournament.

In Recreational Hockey action, it was the Waskaganish Ex-Wings who were dominant in the preliminary round racking up 29 goals on their way to a perfect 3-0 record. But it was the Waskaganish Braves who would raise the championship banner following wins over Eastmain and the Waskaganish Rec Dawgs in the playoff round.



### JBMHL Gala Nemaska Tournament

The James Bay Minor Hockey League held its gala tournament in Nemaska January 13-15. Fourteen Novice, Atom and Bantam teams participated in the three-day event.

In the Novice category, the Eastmain Snipers spoiled the Waskaganish Renegades' perfect record throughout the tournament by defeating the Renegades in the championship game by a score of 8-4.



Remember the name Deyon House. The Eastman Snipers youngster scored seven goals in the Novice final, including six consecutive goals to seal the victory for Eastmain. In fact, House was by far the most dominant player in the tournament, scoring an astounding 27 of the Snipers' 31 goals during the five-game tourney.

In the Atom division, the Waskaganish Renegades needed two overtime victories over Chisasibi, including the winning goal by Ryan Lee Wadden in OT of the final to win the Atom championship. Wadden's tournament winning goal was his third of the championship game and 12th of the tournament as he led all Atom scorers with 17 points.

In Bantam action, it was again another great weekend for the Waskaganish Renegades as they bounced back from a defeat in the first game of the division's preliminary round to go undefeated the rest of the way, knocking off the Eastmain Snipers in a lopsided 5-0 victory in the Bantam final.

Wemindji Wolves' Trent Georgekish was the tourney's leading scorer in the Bantam division, tallying 9 goals and 5 assists in Wemindji's four games. Of particular note was Georgekish's heroic five-point performance against the Waskaganish Renegades during the Wolves' sole playoff round game.

Georgekish set up two 3rd period goals and scored a third in a span of 2:05 to draw the Wolves within one goal of the Renegades. However, Waskaganish would hang on to defeat the Wolves by a score of 7-6 to move on to the Bantam final.

### Feds cut funding for Aboriginal Sports Circle

The Aboriginal Sports Circle (ASC), which has been largely inactive since early 2011, has had its federal funding cut off over reports of financial mismanagement and governance issues. The funding cutoff is expected to effectively kill the organization.

Launched in 1995, "as a national voice for Aboriginal sport in Canada, bringing together the interests of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people", the ASC operated branches across Canada, and had coordinated major events such as the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship (NAHC) and the Aboriginal Sports Awards.

Reports of financial abuse and fraud led to the ASC ceasing operations in early 2011, placing events like the NAHC and the National Aboriginal Games, scheduled for 2014, in jeopardy.

According to documents obtained and published by Postmedia News, the ASC has been facing a number of finan-

cial and governance issues over the past four years.

"Preliminary findings of the audit raise serious concern about the viability of the ASC going forward."

Sport Canada demanded the ASC undergo a "recipient compliance audit" for fiscal years 2009-10, saying future funding was contingent on satisfactory completion of the audit process. The ASC then hired an external consultant to help "develop a recovery plan to strengthen their organizational capacity".

The audit did not go well, leading to all federal funding being cut off, with little chance of it resuming in the near future.

"It's important to ensure taxpayers' money is being spent properly," said federal Minister of State for Sport Bal Gosal in a Postmedia News report. "In this case it wasn't being spent responsibly, so we will be looking for other ways to encourage sport participation among Aboriginal people."

Alternative methods of managing ASC programs, such as the Aboriginal Coaching Strategy, have already been found, with organization of other major events "to be led by provincial/ territorial sports bodies".

While ASC representatives did not provide details as to the specific nature of the organization's financial woes, they did indicate that the problems originated at the "upper management level".

### Eastern Door & North teams likely to participate in 2012 National Aboriginal Hockey Championship

The 2012 National Aboriginal Hockey Championship (NAHC) is fast approaching, and with it the selection process for the Eastern Door & North team entries in the tournament. However, the process has been somewhat more complicated this year as funding for the Eastern Door & North was not sanctioned by Quebec First Nation chiefs.

"The problem here in Quebec is that the Quebec chiefs have taken away our mandate which we had for the last nine years," said Eastern Door & North team



Opening Ceremonies at the 2010 NAHC



Driving the net at the 2010 NAHC

organizer and assistant coach Kenny Kane. "Some of the chiefs did not want to fund the program, which is very expensive every year."

Between the demise of the Aboriginal Sports Circle, due to alleged financial mismanagement, and the withholding of funding for the NAHC, it has meant that organizers like Kane have had to find creative solutions to political problems that threaten the existence of events that are supposed to provide opportunity for First Nations young people.

Kane, a Mohawk from the Kahnawake territory located just outside Montreal, has managed the Kahnawake Sports Complex for the last 24 years and has been involved in a number of First Nations sports events in the Mohawk territory and across the country.

"We are leaning towards becoming independent," explained Kane in reference to management of the hockey team. "We will host a tryout camp here in Kahnawake, like we have in the past. We will invite as many hockey players as we can from the territory of Quebec, we will make a team and go to Saskatoon – with or without the sanction of Quebec's chiefs."

While Kane is clearly less interested in politics than he is in building strong

Eastern Door & North hockey teams, he understands the political reality.

"We can do several things. To protect ourselves politically, we will get a resolution from the Mohawk council to recognize the team as Eastern Door & North, we will get it signed off on and we won't need every chief in the province to sign off on it."

While the political issues are not entirely resolved, Kane is highly confident that a schedule for tryouts will be formalized by mid-February.

"Our program is not new at all. It is proven, well-developed and very well-known," said Kane. "So I am not worried about getting players to participate on a short notice."

Tryouts for both the men's and women's teams will take place at the Kahnawake Sports Centre. Kane and his colleagues expect about 65 young hockey players, ranging in age from 15 to 18, at the men's camp. Tryout camp will run three to four days, with two skates per day. Final player selections will be made on the last day of camp.

While it is not yet confirmed, Kane is hopeful that Cree Nation Bears Midget AA coach Steve Cheechoo will return as coach of the Eastern Door & North men's team.

The NAHC takes place in Saskatoon from May 6-12.

### **Kapuskasing Flyers rebound from a disappointing Kiwanis Midget tourney**

In the last Cree Hockey News & Notes, we reported on the Kapuskasing Flyers' preparations to participate in the 47th edition of the Gatineau International Kiwanis Midget Tournament. After falling 6-1 in their opening game against the South Central Coyotes from Richmond Hill, Ontario, the Flyers rebounded to defeat the Fredericton Canadians 3-1 and the Cole Harbour (Nova Scotia) Wolfpack 2-1 to qualify for the championship. The Flyers faced yet another team from Down East, the Moncton Flyers, in the playoff Round of 16, where they were defeated 3-0 on three 3rd period goals.

The Flyers struggled in their return to league action, dropping a pair of games to the Sault Ste. Marie North Stars, but have since bounced back with four straight victories, including recent wins over Kirkland Lake and New Liskeard during which Braden and Cameron Etherington of Moosonee each racked up 5 points and Brennan Nesrallah, also of Moosonee, tallied 4 points.

### **James Bay Beavers**

The James Bay Beavers Pee Wee CC squad will participate in the prestigious Quebec Pee wee International Tournament starting February 9. The tournament, in its 53rd year, will take place at the Pepsi Colisee in Quebec City. The Beavers will be competing against teams from across Canada and around the world, including teams from the US, Finland, France, Italy and Australia.

### **Amos Forestiers**

The Amos Forestiers hope to end the regular season on a high note as they face division leaders Collège Esther Blondin for back-to-back games on home ice, February 3-4. The Forestiers currently sit second in their division with 42 points in 39 games. Since returning from the holiday break, Waskaganish's Alexander Hester has recorded 2 goals and 2 assists in eight games for the Forestiers.

### **Player Movement**

Defenceman Silas Neeposh of Mississini has left the Kahnawake Condors of the Quebec Junior AAA Hockey League to join the Temiscaming Titans of the Greater Metro Hockey League. Drafted as a 16-year-old by the Chicoutimi Saguenéens of the QMJHL, Neeposh was named Rookie Defensive Player of the Week in the QJAAHL just prior to Christmas. Neeposh has yet to record a point in his first five games with the Titans.



# More than a coach

## Cree Nation Bears' Steve Cheechoo provides hockey guidance and more

By Daniel Coyle

You wouldn't know it by looking at the standings, but the Cree Nation Bears Midget AA hockey team has had a lot of positives come from the current season, during which they have accumulated a record of 3-23-2.

Yes, that record is good enough for last place in the Norbord Midget AA League, but for Bears coach Steve Cheechoo winning is not only determined by the numbers in the standings, it is also measured by his players' commitment to the game, school, teamwork and improving themselves.

Originally from Moose Factory, Ontario, Cheechoo now resides in Mistissini and has been involved with First Nations hockey for more years than he can remember. In addition to coaching the Bears, Cheechoo has also coached the Eastern Door & North team at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship as well as being active at off-season hockey camps in communities across the James Bay region.

"We have won this league in the past but for a lot of years we have been struggling," said Cheechoo, about the Bears' on-ice troubles. "I just try to keep it positive, keep them going strong and going hard right 'til the end.

"Sometimes, life does not go the way you want it to. But we have to make the best of what we are doing."

Cheechoo faces a number of challenges coaching young teen players. From doing what is required to safeguard them from the negative influences of drugs and alcohol, to enforcing league rules that mandate that all players must be in school to be eligible to play, Cheechoo has his hands full.

"Over all the years, I've done what I've done for the youth. To keep them off the street, to help them with struggles they have off-ice with alcohol and drugs. To help them do something positive," said Cheechoo. "I'd rather see the kids on the

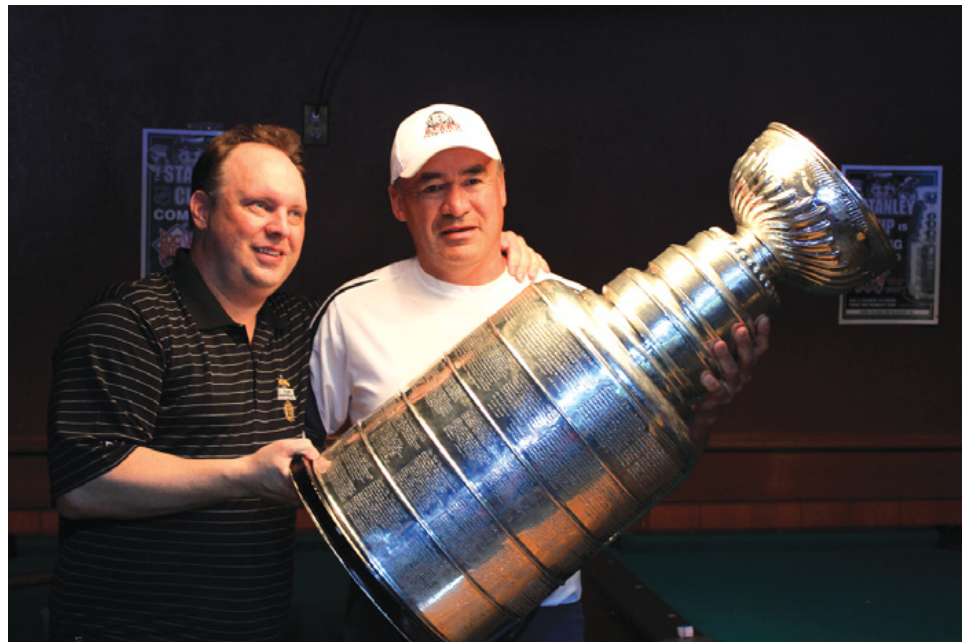
ice then out there alone doing something that they shouldn't be doing."

What those players need to be doing right now is preparing for the playoffs. Despite the Bears' losing record, the team will still qualify for the playoffs. Before that happens, the club must complete two games on the road versus the Amos Comets and the Val-d'Or Apollos

— maybe someone younger who can bring something different to the team. Sometimes when you've been coaching for many years, you need to step back and take a break."

But that does not mean that Cheechoo will leave hockey entirely.

"I'll be helping out here and there," he said. "My aim is to still be involved



Steve Cheechoo and Boston Bruins Director of Scouting Wayne Smith enjoy a moment with the Stanley Cup

before returning home to Mistissini to face their first-round playoff opponents.

Playoffs start on the weekend of February 18-19. At press time, it had not been determined who the Bears will face in the playoffs. But, it is clear that the team will have the benefit of home ice, at least early on.

If home-ice advantage is not sufficient motivation for the young Bears players to play Cinderella during the playoff season, perhaps news of Coach Cheechoo's future plans will be.

"It is possible this is my final year coaching," revealed Cheechoo. "I have been doing this for many years and we need someone to step up and take over

with minor hockey, to work with the kids, to build things from the grassroots.

"I want to teach them what discipline is and when they get older they will realize what it takes to win, on the ice and in life," continued Cheechoo, before pausing for a moment.

"But you never know. Sometimes, the good Lord will give you a different direction. You never know where He will take you."

With any luck, He will take the underdog Bears on a deep playoff run and allow this passionate hockey coach to exit from behind the bench on a high note.



## UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

### Keeping the northern skies safe

by Xavier Kataquapit

**T**ravelling in the north has always been a hazard for all kinds of reasons. The remoteness makes it difficult to have all the latest technologies in place. It is not like life in the south where many safety precautions are in place for the everyday traveller no matter what their means of transport. The weather is a risk factor in the north most of the year but in the winter time things can actually be deadly.

Most northerners from remote First Nations were saddened but not surprised to hear about the recent aircraft accident that occurred in North Spirit Lake First Nation in north-western Ontario January 10. The accident involved a Keystone Air passenger plane, which crashed a kilometre short of the community's runway during a blinding snowstorm. Four people died in the crash and one person survived.

The community leaders have pointed out that navigational aids for landing aircraft are not available at their airport. That creates problems for landings in poor weather. The lack of the latest safety equipment contributed to this tragic accident.

The news of this plane crash in a remote northern community brought back memories of fearful flights during the winter back home in Attawapiskat. We did a lot of flying around when I was a teenager attending high school in southern communities like Timmins and North Bay. My friends and I regularly flew up north and down south again for every major holiday during the school year. The flights arriving home for Christmas and the ones leaving after the New Year were always the scariest. To make matters worse we had to take off and land several times on one journey. On a trip from Timmins to Attawapiskat we had to land and take off in Moosonee, Fort Albany, Kashechewan and then finally at home.

I recall taking off from Timmins at night in near blizzard conditions and landing at each community with blinding snow all around us. I always had an appreciation of the on-board aircraft technology, navigational aids and the pilot's skill needed to fly a plane in the winter time. Even when I was young I also understood that our safety depended on some luck. I remember watching the lights outside my passenger window and wondering how anyone could see through the blizzard of white specks and the darkness beyond. There were times dur-

ing some flights when the pilot just couldn't land our plane safely with the first approach and had to take off, circle the airport and try again. It was frightening to be tossed about in an enclosed cabin, up and down, then left and right, without knowing if we were going to survive the flight. I was always relieved to hear that loud thud of the wheels hitting the frozen gravel runway and then the whine of the engines as we braked.

Anyone who lives in a remote First Nation community has stories like mine. Even if people never flew they were always aware of the comings and goings of aircraft. My dad and my brothers handled a cargo business in Attawapiskat and our work regularly took us to the airport to unload the freight service. It was a common occurrence in the winter time during blinding snowstorms to listen to the aircraft circling the community. We could hear the plane just over our heads and understood that the pilot was waiting for a short window of opportunity to line up and possibly land. I recall watching some cargo flights that had no passengers, dip down from under the clouds, bank steeply left and right over the treetops to line up for the runway and at the last second straighten out for a quick landing. It's a scary sight to see the floodlights of a plane appear out of the clouds, bobbing in all kinds of directions before finally finding the runway.

Community leaders in many northern First Nations understand what is needed to make these flights safer but in too many cases, their requests are put off or forgotten. Chief Rita Thompson of North Spirit Lake explained in news reports after the accident that her First Nation has been asking for airplane approach sensors for more than a decade.

Flying aircraft in the north is a challenge and doing so during the winter time is an even greater risk. We shouldn't have to wait for a tragedy to occur like the one in North Spirit Lake to take notice of these risks. Many remote northern communities across Canada rely on air service as a lifeline to the rest of the world. Our leadership and those responsible for providing services and funding for these northern airports should really make a point to provide airplane approach sensors and any other vital technology for communities that don't have the latest aids. This will save lives.



# CLASSIFIEDS

## BIRTHDAYS

To Jodie George House: Happy belated birthday on January 12th. Love you so much, with all my heart. May the sparkle in your eye twinkle all night. From, Angela House

To Emma Bearskin: Happy belated birthday! Love you so much and miss you! From Angela

To Miss Caroline Matthew: Happy belated birthday on Jan. 7th. Hope you had a blast! May the man you have take you to the moon and back. From, Angela House

February 11th will be my son's 2nd birthday. You are the light and sunshine in my life. The battles we fight together will only make us stronger. I love you with all of my heart. You made my life complete when you came into this world. Keep shining for mommy, one day you be a great hockey player and maybe you will be Chara's hardest shot! You hurt mom when you slapshot her already at 2 years of age. Hope your day is filled with many happy memories. With love and kisses from mom, your greatest fan. (Dina S)

Birthday greeting going out to a cute and adorable son and brother Adam Matoush on February 11th, 2012. Wishing you the best on your special day! From: mom (Dina), dad (Richard) and big sister Melissa. We love you like a love song, your favorite song. On February 18th, 2012, my love will be celebrating his birthday, my husband Richard Matoush. May you be blessed

with many more years with us. I love you more every day. Thank you for being there for me and our 2 little ones. With lots and lots of love, from your loving wife Dina S. Matoush

Birthday greetings going out to the greatest dad in the world: Richard Matoush on Feb. 18th, 2012. We'd like to show our appreciation by saying thank you and we love you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for being there for us, especially when we are sick. From your two kids, Melissa and Adam.

A special lil boy will turn 2 years old on Feb 15th, his name is Johnny-Joe. We love you so much! Many more to come and Happy Valentine's Day from your siblings Tristan, Noah-Remay, Viola, mom Patricia and Dad Gordon Snowboy xoxo (chis)

## ANNIVERSARIES

On February 7th, 2012, my parents Emily and Abraham will be celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary. Wow, you are two amazing parents. We love you both and I would like to thank for all you have done for me and my family. From: Dina, Richard, Melissa and Adam Matoush

## PERSONAL MESSAGES

I am looking for relatives of a brave soldier named as Private Bertie Nackogie, enlisted in the 228th Battalion, Moose Factory, 1916 to fight in World War One. He never made it, dying in Toronto of pneumonia and buried in an unmarked grave in Prospect Cemetery. We

believe his actual name was BERTIE NAKOGEE. A proper gravestone and ceremony will be unveiled in the Spring. If you know of any relatives of this man please contact me, my name is Bob Richardson. rrichardson111@cogeco.ca 289-878-4702. Thank you.

## HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Happy Valentine's Day to Papa and Tsita Wila! You have made my life complete. I love you both with all my heart, forever and a day. With love, hugs and kisses, from Momma Bear

Happy 1st Valentine's Day to Demitrius Nigel Jalee Asquabaneskum. We love you so much! Hope everyone has a special Valentine's Day filled with love, laughter, caring and sharing. Happy Valentine's Day from all of us at 1 and 3 Ratt Ave!

I would like to wish a Happy Valentine's Day to my hubby Timothy Napartuk. We love u so much! From Jeannie and kids

With all the things you say and do, the smiles you share and laughter too! I am proud and pleased that you are my son. I love you today and every day! My little Valentine Evander-boy. I especially love being loved by you. Happy Valentine's Day!! XoXoX Mommy :)

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.**

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 ([www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca))

Youth Helpline: 1-800-263-2266 ([www.teljeunes.com](http://www.teljeunes.com))

Parents' Helpline: 1-800-361-5085 ([www.parentshelpline.ca](http://www.parentshelpline.ca))

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333

([www.enfant-retourquebec.ca](http://www.enfant-retourquebec.ca))

Drug Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 ([www.drogue-aiderreference.qc.ca](http://www.drogue-aiderreference.qc.ca))

Gambling Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 ([www.info-reference.qc.ca](http://www.info-reference.qc.ca))

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 ([www.sosviolenceconjugale.com](http://www.sosviolenceconjugale.com))

Health and Sexuality Resources Center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) ([www.criss.org](http://www.criss.org))

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688 ([www.nwsm.info](http://www.nwsm.info))

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553 (<http://www.suicide-quebec.net/>)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: [www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources](http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources)

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